

OLIN
++
BX
8431
.C7
M47
1881a



CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
3 1924 074 308 077

**THE ORIGIN
And
EARLY HISTORY
Of The
Congregational Methodist Church
BY
Rev. S. C. McDaniel**



T-H-E--O-R-I-G-I-N

AND

E-A-R-L-Y--H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

OF THE

C-O-N-G-R-E-G-A-T-I-O-N-A-L--M-E-T-H-O-D-I-S-T--C-H-U-R-C-H.

BY

Rev. S. C. McDaniel.

Atlanta, Georgia.

Jas. P. Harrison & Co., Printers & Publishers, 1881.

DEDICATION

To all lovers of the Doctrines of Original Methodism, Believers in Ministerial equality, and advocates of Republican Government in Church as well as State, this little book is dedicated by The Committee.

PREFACE

No apology is necessary for the appearance of this volume; Church history is always an interesting subject of study. Had the history of the Congregational Methodist Church been written fifteen years ago, much which now is perhaps forever lost to posterity would have been preserved.

Twenty-seven years after the organization of the Church but few of the first actors were left on the stage, and the passing years had greatly diminished the store of recollection of those who still remained. This, added to the natural weakness of human memory, and the great political, civil and social revolution through which our section had passed during the last quarter of a century, rendered the effort to trace the events of 1852 in 1879 exceedingly difficult.

The great age and feeble health of the Chairman of the Committee (Rev. H. Phinazee), caused him to decline writing this history, for which he was better qualified than any living man, except, perhaps, Rev. J. F. N. Huddleston.

At the solicitation of brother Phinazee, I agreed to undertake the task of compilation in pursuance of the design of the Georgia State Conference.

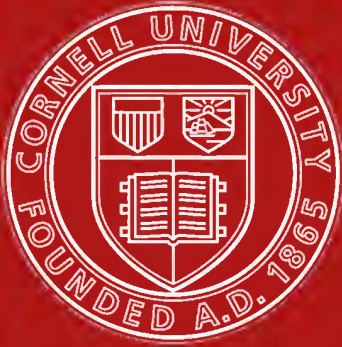
For some time after it had been arranged that I should do this part of the work, I found myself unable to start for the lack of information of the inception of the movement. This, however, was soon supplied by a number of good brethren who were actors in the movement.

In the progress of the work, however, I was destined to meet more formidable difficulties.

One serious impediment in my way was my inability to learn anything definite as to the start of the Church in the State of Alabama. Again and again I sought light on this point--in every known way, and through all discoverable channels--but all to no purpose, for I was eventually obliged, after delaying the completion of the work for some weeks, to close my labors without any history of the original movement in Alabama.

Another serious trouble met me when I came to treat of the Convention of the Churches, which met in 1855. Although there was doubtless a full record of its proceedings kept, all my efforts to find such a record were utterly unavailing, and I was obliged to depend on the few survivors of that body to furnish details of its proceedings, and with these I was forced to content myself.

Thus circumstanced, my task has been a difficult one--beyond what I had anticipated--and, by the blessings of God, good health and strength, and the



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

assistance of many of my good brethren, I eventually completed my task, such as it is.

I am fully aware of the many imperfections of the work for which I have no other apology to make than simply to say, it is the best I could do under the circumstances. At the hands of a charitable Christian public I expect no unkindness; and if any should be so unreasonable as to blame me because I did not have the ability to write a better book, I have no quarrel for them.

INTRODUCTION

In order that this history may be better understood, a short introduction is thought to be necessary.

The publication of the articles in The Congregational Methodist ended in the spring of 1880, and the design was then to have the work put in book form without any delay; but no definite action in this particular having been had by the Georgia State Conference, the matter was delayed until the meeting of that body in the fall of that year. At that session such arrangements were made as would secure the publication of the book before the sitting of the General Conference in May, 1881.

In writing the history, I was desirous of showing the changes which have been made from the first organization until the present; and not having one of the original books of Discipline, I made inquiry among my brethren for one, and found it exceedingly difficult to find, but eventually I was kindly furnished one by brother George W. Todd, of Mississippi; and believing that very few of those little books are now to be found, I have, upon consultation with brothers U. C. Fambrough and James G. Phinazee (who are assisting me in the publishing of this book), concluded to add, as an appendix to this book, all that part of the original book of Discipline which has been in any manner changed from the organization of the first church to the present time. The appendix contains all the first twenty-one pages, except the "Advisory Rules," which in that book were placed between the articles "Terms of Membership" and "Of Offences." The remainder of the book contains the "Advisory Rules," the twenty-five Articles of Religion, including the note to be found at the bottom of 39th page of our present book of Discipline, and as marked at the close of the XXIII. Article of Religion. In addition to these the little book had a form for administration of the Lord's Supper; one for the baptism of infants; one for the baptism of adults; one for ordination of Elders, of Elder's credentials, and closing with the resolution as copied in Chapter VIII. of this book.

This much of the book is given in order that the old landmarks may be preserved. The whole of it is not included in the appendix, because it would be increasing the cost of the book without increasing its value.

It has been thought best to bind the book in cheap binding, so as to put it within the reach of all, but to print it on the very best paper to be had in order that it may be preserved, and, if necessary, rebound.

It is hoped the book will give satisfaction.

CHAPTER I.

The causes which led to the organization of the Congregational Methodist Church, like the origin of all great movements, are involved in mystery to some extent; some of them, however, are known to those who witnessed the first organization, and will here be treated of.

Methodism in America was originally a kind of missionary Church, and in its earlier days the "itineracy" was the life-blood of the whole system, and, as the people were looked after by the pioneer Methodist circuit-rider, more on the fashion of sheep without a shepherd than otherwise; and as there were but few regular churches and fewer church houses, and the people in many instances as migratory as their teachers, who changed fields every year, there was not much government, except such as operated on the preachers themselves, and as they made very light demands on the membership for pay, it was very natural that as they did all the work, and frequently without any considerable compensation, the membership should readily accord to them the right to govern the Church. For a number of years, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was but one Bishop in the whole United States, and he received only sixteen dollars a quarter for his salary, and the rest of the clergy fared about the same way, and it will not

astonish any one to know, that whatever Bishop Asbury did in governing the Church was never complained of by the laity. As early as 1816, however, the clergy began to controvert the propriety of the Bishops having the right to appoint the Presiding Elders, and in 1820, the General Conference, at Baltimore, passed a resolution authorizing the Conference to elect the Presiding Elders. Joshua Soule was at the same Conference elected a Bishop, but declined to serve on account of the passage of said resolution. Bishop McKendree, however (not being present when the resolution passed), went into the Conference and induced the suspension of said resolution for four years. This and kindred questions continued to excite the Church until 1828, when it resulted in the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church, which was composed mainly of the dissatisfied members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This organization differed from the one from whence it originated mainly in two features, viz: it had no Episcopacy, and allowed lay representation in its Conferences. But as time rolled on, the world advanced, and experience proved eventually that other important reforms were needed to fully adapt Methodism to a thickly settled and advancing country.

About the year 1850, Rev. Lovick Pierce, then one of the leading spirits in the M. E. Church, South, wrote a series of very strong articles, which were published in the Southern Christian Advocate, on the subject of public worship, in which he showed the absolute necessity of abandoning the old style of week-day preaching on circuits, and the necessity of Saturday and Sabbath preaching. He met stout opposition from the pen of the venerable Allen Turner and others, and thus the minds of the laity were directed to this matter. The investigation on this point led to the discovery of another defect in the governmental economy of the M. E. Church, South, which appeared to have been entirely overlooked up to this time, viz: the degraded station which local ministers were obliged to take and maintain in said Church. Although a great deal of the work of the Church was done by them, they were neither allowed to exercise any governing function over the thousands of converts who annually were brought into the Church through the instrumentality of their labors, nor to have any voice in saying who should govern either their converts or themselves. This truth, perhaps, was to a greater extent operative in the production of the Congregational Methodist Church than any other one thing. It is true the originators of this Church were opposed to Episcopacy, and opposed to the government of the Church being entirely in the hands of the clergy; they also objected to itineracy as a system in any form as being inoperative, cumbersome and unnecessarily expensive. But the great sun and centre of their system was the desire that there should be no artificial, unscriptural and hurtful distinction among the watchmen who had been placed as sentinels on the watch-tower of salvation by the Great Captain of the armies of heaven and earth.

CHAPTER II.

In the early part of the year 1852, there lived in middle Georgia, and principally in Monroe county, several prominent local preachers belonging to the M. E. Church, South, among whom were Rev. Hiram Phinazee, then a little less than fifty years old; Absalom Ogletree, near the same age; J. F. Wethersbee, some few years younger, and J. F. N. Huddleston and W. H. Graham, then young men, perhaps about thirty years old. There were also in the same section of country a number of laymen, distinguished for their intelligence and high-toned demeanor, as well as their piety and generosity. Among the latter may be enumerated Mickleberry Merritt, W. L. Fambrough, Robinson Fambrough, John Ham, Jackson Bush, William A. McCune, John E. Pettegrew, James R. McCord, David Ogletree, E. White, Robert Walker, S. F. Speer, J. W. McCord, John Goodrum, and many others. Of the ministers above named, all were active and laborious workers, and remarkably successful in their efforts. They were traveling to the various churches in their section, and regularly on the Sabbath days preaching the Word, and large numbers were converted under their preaching, and revivals sprang up in different places. Soon the fact began to attract attention that, although these good men did most of the work in the revivals, the circuit-rider must needs receive the new converts into the Church and baptize them, while those under whose ministry they had been awakened and converted, stood by with folded hands, without even a voice as to whether the applicants should be received into the Church or not.

This proved an excellent eye-opener to the intelligent laymen, who began to notice and comment on this peculiar and not very admirable feature in their Church government, and the airing of this part of the polity of the M. E. Church, South, by the laity, excited in the minds of the local ministers a spirit of inquiry into their own positions, and thus the ball began to roll, and the more they looked into the matter the more they felt the urgent necessity of some sort of reform.

At this time, Rev. Dr. McCarell Peurifoy was on the Forsyth circuit, Rev. John B. Wardlaw on the Jackson Circuit, and Rev. John C. Simmons the Presiding Elder. This excitement was greater within the bounds of these two circuits than elsewhere. The circuit-riders and the Elder were not well pleased with the turn the tide of affairs were taking, and began to apply their correctives like the old advocates of blistering in the shape counter-irritants, by gravely intimating that the "least said" about these imperfections in the machinery of the M. E. Church, South, would be the easiest mended; and that unless the ministers desisted from the too free use of their tongues, they might find their authority to preach taken away, and that the laymen, unless they should become more prudent in the expression of their dissent to the high Episcopacy of their Church, would find themselves outside of the pale of the Church.

But such threats were but idle words to such men, and they heeded them as little as did Daniel the mandate of the king against prayer, and were as careless of the threatened harm as were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of the rage of the monarch when they refused to fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up "in the plain of Dura."

CHAPTER III.

Early in the year 1852, the feeling of dissatisfaction referred to in the second chapter of this history, became so manifest and public that it was evident some kind of action was about to be taken, the circuit-riders on the Jackson and Forsyth works--doubtless believing harm would result from any separate organization, strove hard to avert it. The Presiding Elder of the district also added his most earnest endeavors to preserve the unity of the M. E. Church, South, by preventing organization. But the die had been cast, the purpose of the men moving in the matter was not a mere whim, to pass away like the morning cloud. It was not dissatisfaction growing out of individual wrong; it was a deep seated, firmly rooted and fixed dissatisfaction with the very foundation stone of their ecclesiastical economy. And the solemn alternative was presented to them of forming a Church government of their own, with which they might be satisfied, or of living for the balance of their lives under a Church government with which they never could be contented. And although it was painful for these good men thus to sever themselves from a Church in whose doctrines they most "steadfastly believed," and from brethren and sisters with whom they had lived so long and so lovingly; yet upon their knees, with hearts uplifted to the Great Head of the Church, they felt it to be their duty, to sever their relationship to the M. E. Church, South, and with them the voice of duty was ever heeded.

Accordingly on the 8th day of May, 1852, a meeting was had at the house of Mickleberry Merritt, in Monroe county, Georgia, for the purpose of organizing a Church. At this meeting there were but few present save those who took part in that meeting. At this late period it is impossible to state exactly all who did then cast in their lots with the "little flock" there assembled; perhaps a majority of the actors in that scene have passed away, while those who remain are scattered abroad over the earth, and from the loss of the records or minutes of this meeting and the frailty of the human memory, the full history cannot now be given. This is to be regretted, for the reason that to those who shall come after us, especially will it be of the greatest interest to know all the particulars of this small beginning. The meeting was not so large as had been anticipated--some who had intended to take part in the movement had, from an unknown cause, changed their minds--and when the hour of decisive action came were not there. Like Gideon's army the little company, by the application of the severest tests, had been lessened until all the feeble of purpose and faint-hearted had been left at the rear; and it was only those who had been found worthy to defy the flames of persecution; who stood at the front with purposes set, hearts fixed and ears deaf to all other sounds save that of the call to duty, that gathered round the cradle of the infant Church to catch the first impress of its features, as the wise men of the East gathered at the manger to see the beauty of "The Babe of Bethlehem."

The meeting organized by calling William L. Fambrough to the chair, and requesting Rev. H. Phinazee to act as secretary. The exercises of the meeting were opened with prayer led by Rev. William H. Graham. The names of the following brethren were then enrolled by the secretary as the membership of the infant Church: W. L. Fambrough, Rev. Hiram Phinazee, Rev. Absalom Ogletree, Rev. W. H. Graham, Robinson Fambrough, Jackson Bush, John Flynt, James M. Flemming, George W. Todd, Mickleberry Merritt, and Travis Ivey. The meeting adopted a preamble and sundry resolutions, drawn up by Rev. Hiram Phinazee, as the basis of their action, and then adjourned.

The preamble and resolutions adopted at this meeting are probably not now in

existence; at all events I have been unable to find them. This is greatly to be regretted, because what these good men then committed to writing as to their desires and intentions, would be exceedingly interesting to us, and much more to future generations. The venerable secretary of that meeting, who drafted these expressions of the feelings of the meeting still remembers the substance thereof. The preamble set out the inefficiency of the itinerant system, as then practiced, of large circuits and generally week-day preaching at country churches, declaring that the preaching to walls and benches would never evangelize the mass of the people. 2. The danger of a government where the whole power was in the same hands. 3. The impropriety of depriving the people of a voice in their own government. 4. The unscriptural character of the invidious distinctions made by the laws of the M. E. Church, South, between the itinerant and local divisions of their ministers. 5. That there was no reason to suppose these features of the government of the M. E. Church, South, would be changed soon, if ever.

And the resolutions declared the intention of those taking part in the meeting to establish a Church whose doctrines should be exactly Methodist, but whose government should be in accordance with our civil institutions and their own ideas of propriety. Thus declaring to the world and their former brethren the motives of their conduct, they weighed anchor, and spread to the breeze the sail of THE CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH.

CHAPTER IV.

The meeting at brother Merritt's on the 8th of May, 1852, was indeed the "small beginning," of a great work. Two characteristics of the meeting I desire to notice in this number, 1. There was not a single one of those who then and there took the important step of organizing a new Church, who did so hastily--or in a spirit of envy or ambition. They would have made any reasonable sacrifice, or concession to maintain their former Church relations, would have been willing to labor resolutely or wait patiently for needed reform, if there had been any prospect that labor or waiting would have brought them about. But no such prospect appeared in any quarter, and the course which they then pursued presented the only course proper for them to adopt. Such has ever been the conduct of reformers, either in Church or State, when they have been good men. Luther, Zwingli and Melancthon, were loth to sever their relationship with the Roman Church, and only did so because it was their duty. John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, and their co-laborers maintained their relations with the Episcopal Church as long as possible. And so did these good men in 1852 reluctantly do what the voice of duty demanded at their hands. 2. This action on the part of these men, met with the most determined opposition from the Church from which they separated. This also has ever been the case with similar movements. To a disinterested and unbiased judgment it would seem quite unnatural, that any Church should not willingly consent that any number of its members who were dissatisfied with either its doctrines or polity, should "depart in peace," but history shows that they have scarcely ever been willing for their brethren to leave their fold, and go where they would be better satisfied. The ministers in charge of the churches and circuits where this movement first took root, strove hard to drown it out and prevent its spread. And in doing so, did many things which seemed at the time to be harsh, but of this I do not complain, nor does the Congregational Methodist Church; they were good men and doubtless were honestly of the opinion that this movement would eventuate in much evil and little good. But time has demonstrated that these opinions of theirs were incorrect. Those men could never have been of much service to a Church, whose polity was so entirely at variance with their views of right and propriety as that of "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South," but in a Church whose polity they believed in--and whose government they devotedly loved, they have accomplished great good. This was a very small meeting, scarcely as many persons in it as were on the little fishing-boat with Peter, on the night of "fruitless toil," yet this was a meeting destined to exercise a powerful influence on the world of Methodism. And those humble, good men had perhaps as little idea of the stupendous results to follow their humble action on that quiet May day, as Peter had of the effect to follow his sermon when he began to preach on the day of Pentecost. Of these men I shall write more at length when I shall have closed these historical sketches of the early days of our Church, but of the results which have thus far been realized from this meeting I shall say something, and with that close this number.

From the day when Rev. Francis Asbury, called himself or allowed others to call him a "Bishop," to the 8th day of May, 1852, the government of the Methodist Church in its various branches, except that of the "Methodist Protestant," had been entirely in the hands of the itineracy, and the authority of the Episcopacy growing stronger and stronger. In no Conference was a layman entitled to a seat, save the quarterly Conference, and in these only such laymen took part as the itineracy chose to have there, and who could be put in, and put out, of said Conference with the care of

uttering a single command, and the placing them in such positions did not amount to as much as the tantalization of a sailor in throwing a tub to a whale, for when a whale was once in possession of the tub, although he could accomplish nothing by its possession or use outside of amusing himself, still he could keep it as long as he chose, but these laymen could only play with the tub until it was taken from them, or rather, until they were taken from it. The great movement resulting in the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church nearly twenty-five years before, had not changed this feature of either branch of the parent Church. But how stands the case to-day? No where in all this land, either North or South, does a Methodist Conference assemble now without the laymen being there! And these thousands of laymen who hold seats in "the General and inferior Conferences (most of them being ignorant that such a meeting was ever held), are indebted to the actors of May 8th, 1852 for the privileges they thus enjoy. Where is the week-day system of serving country churches in operation prior to that time? Why are nearly all supplied with Sabbath preaching? The hundreds of thousands of country Methodists all over this country who now have preaching on the Holy Sabbath instead of on a working-day, are indebted for these blessings to the good men who so manfully struck for this privilege amid the opening flowers of May, 1852. Why so many hundreds of good local preachers now exercising all their functions as pastors of churches to-day? Whence came these privileges to local ministers and blessings to the people? The answer is they came from the "quiet chamber" at brother Merritt's house, where these good men united their feelings, their prayers and their tears, a little more than a quarter of a century ago.

And what more shall I say of the gracious results which have grown out of this "day of small things." For the time would fail me to tell of the many thousands who have thus been privileged to attend the Methodist services on Sabbath, of the tens of thousands of faithful local ministers whose hearts before that burned within them as Jesus talked to them, "by the way," as they looked for an open door where they might feed the flock of God, and have thus been given a door of utterance, and of the great host of sinners, to whom they have successfully pointed out the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Faithful and highly favored little band!! standing in the fore-front of the battle listening only to the voice of their Captain, and responding to the roll call, "here am I." And down in their hearts, so full of anxiety and yet so full of peace, a still small voice was heard saying, "fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

CHAPTER V.

I have dwelt at some length on the history of the first meeting held in the interest of the Congregational Methodist Church, because I regard it as an important meeting; and although the principal part of the two preceding chapters has been devoted to its history, I do not feel that I should dismiss this part of my subject without noticing one other characteristic thereof.

From the time of Wesley's administration in America, there had been, prior to the 8th of May, 1852, one hundred meetings in different parts of the United States, similar in many respects to the one I have been writing of as occurring on that day, and nearly all of them have been confined almost entirely to the communities respectively where they occurred and have passed away with those who took part in them, and there are to-day a large number of independent Methodist churches in the Southern States who have no connection with each other or with any other church. The Church which was formed at brother Merritt's had a connexional as well as a congregational and republican element in its form of government, and to this cause may be ascribed the popularity and spread of the Church which had its birth in Monroe county, Georgia, on the 8th of May, 1852.

There is one feature of the subsequent history of the C. M. Church which I desire here to notice. Within a short time from the organization of the first church the movement had spread over several counties in Middle Georgia, and found foothold in the States of Alabama and Mississippi, and has, from that day until this, been prospering in all three of said States, and has now State Conferences in six States, and organizations in several others with many thousands of members; still, in the county where it had its origin and has lived and flourished for more than a quarter of a century, there are many persons ignorant of the existence of such a Church and more ignorant of its characteristics and doctrines. Those who desired to impede its progress soon ascertained that the best way to prevent its spread was to say nothing about it. Hence their papers (whether under the influence of the gag-law or not I cannot say) have refused to publish anything about it. Its ministers as a general rule receive such notice and courtesy as the rules of good breeding absolutely require at the hands of their ministers and nothing more. I do not complain at this as unkindness or persecution, for one who attempts reform in an existing Church organiza-

tion of an important character and does not expect to meet persecution, calculates improperly and is doomed to disappointment. It has ever been so, and ever will be so. But in dismissing this part of the subject I feel impelled to say simply this: The organs of the M. E. Church, South, by their conduct ignore and appear to be ignorant of the existence of the C. M. Church, although their Discipline has many features in it which were taken from that of the C. M. Church. If we shall be true to ourselves, true to our Church paper, true to our principles as Christians, and true to the Great Head of the Church, the time will soon come when the existence of the Congregational Methodist Church will no longer be ignored.

CHAPTER VI.

Having dwelt at length on the first meeting of the friends of Congregational Methodism, for the reasons already stated, I come now to speak of the second meeting. This meeting was held at Rehoboth church about the third Sunday in May, 1852. Between the time of the first and second meetings the feeling had spread over a considerable section of Middle Georgia, and quite a number of ministers and members from the M. E. Church, South, came forward and united with the organization. Among the former I can mention, Rev. J. F. N. Huddleston and Rev. J. Fletcher Wethersbee, and among the latter I should name John Ham, John H. Phinazee, David Ogletree, John E. Petigrew, Edward White, and others.

Quite a number of those who had allied themselves with the new movement were members of the M. E. Church, South, at Rehoboth; indeed nearly the whole of the membership at that place went with the C. M. Church, and this was probably the reason why they felt like they had the liberty to use the church-house at Rehoboth to meet in. But they were not permitted to occupy the house--the same, under the economy of the M. E. Church, having been dooded to the Georgia Annual Conference, and its officers not being willing for "the seceders," as they were called, to use it.

By way of parenthesis I will here say: This reference to the persecution which the pioneers of Congregational Methodism met with, is not lugged in here to excite any sympathy for the C. M. Church, nor to cast reflections on the M. E. Church, South, but it is done in the discharge of the duties of the historian, who, if he does his duty to posterity (for whose benefit he principally writes) states transactions just as they occurred, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Not being permitted to hold their meetings in the church-house they withdrew to the arbor of the camp-ground near by, and there held their meeting. The business of this meeting consisted principally (so far as its secular affairs were concerned) in the appointment of a committee of three to prepare a book of Discipline, with rules and regulations for the government of the Church. That committee consisted of Revs. H. Phinizee, A. Ogletree, and J. F. N. Huddleston. And here again "these good men and true" committed themselves and commended the cause of the infant Church in prayer to the Great Head of the Church, with abiding confidence in the propriety of the step they had taken, and in grateful remembrance of the partial success which had attended them thus far in their unabated zeal in devotion to duty, and humble reliance on Divine assistance and guidance in the future, they parted with "the benediction" of peace. Rev. Allen Turner, a good old man of the M. E. Church, South, who was present to forbid the use by the new organization of the church-house, was requested to pray in the meeting. He led in prayer, asking fervently that if the move was not of God it might come to naught; but if it was of God that it might prosper, and all the brethren said "amen," and the prayer has been heard and answered.

CHAPTER VII.

The meeting at Rehoboth church, as before stated, appointed a committee to prepare a book of Discipline, and report to the next meeting. When and where this third meeting was held, I have been unable to ascertain, and I regret my inability to now state, what would be of great interest, and which perhaps may never be known hereafter. It is, however, pretty certain that it was not long after the second meeting, as the book of Discipline was published and given to the world early in the month of August, 1852. The character of the book, as reported by the committee and adopted by the Church, I shall now notice, only so far as to refer to the preface, as embodying some of the leading features of the Church.

The Rev. H. Phinazee, of the committee above stated, was the author of the above preface. The book was a small pamphlet of 48 pages, published by A. G. Murray Griffin, Ga., and in order that the reader may fully understand the same, I here insert that preface just as it there occurred:

(See Preface in the Discipline of the Congregational Methodist Church.)

With this declaration of the foundation of their action, the Congregational Methodist Church took its place among the ecclesiastical organizations of the country, trusting to the correctness of its principles and the purity of its motives for that success which was afterwards to attend it.

Thus we have presented the history of the completion of the organization of the first individual Church, the nucleus around which all in the future were to gather. Less than three months had been consumed in perfecting this machinery, and the enduring character of the work thus done, declares most emphatically that it was well done, as the leading features of the original Discipline are preserved to the present time by the C. M. Church, and many of its peculiar features have been adopted by other populous members of the great Methodist family.

The body of the Discipline was written by Rev. J. F. N. Huddleston, and when reported by him to his two fellow-committeemen, was adopted by them with very slight alteration, if any at all, and was adopted by the Church as it came from the Committee.

CHAPTER VIII.

The first Congregational Methodist Church constituted was called Rocky Creek, its membership principally were formerly members of Rehoboth, the name of this church was afterwards changed, as we shall see hereafter. Between the 8th of May and the 1st of August, other organizations had been effected. Mount Hope, in Spalding county, Rock Spring, in Monroe county, Pleasant Grove, in Butts county, New Market, in Monroe county, New Hope, in Pike county, and Providence, in Monroe county, making, in all, seven churches, and all in the same section of country.

As the Discipline provided for District Conferences, these seven churches, on the 12th day of August, 1852, by their delegates, held their first District Conference, at Rocky Creek Baptist church--that church kindly tendering to said body the use of their church-house. Upon the assembling of the Conference, the following named delegates, with proper credentials, came forward and had their names enrolled, viz:

From Rocky Creek church, A. Ogletree, J. F. N. Huddleston, and H. Phinazee from Mount Hope church, Robert Walker and Joshua Sheptrine, from Rock Spring church, Allen Reeves from Pleasant Grove church, George W. Barber and William A. McCune, from New Market church, J. F. Wethersby and Benjamin Davis, from Providence church William H. Graham, from New Hope church Daniel Carroll. Rev. J. F. Wethersby was elected President, and Rev. H. Phinazee, Secretary. The President opened the Conference with prayer. At the organization of the first church at brother Merritt's house, we have seen the little company gathered, bowing reverently before their Great Head, and heard the voice of ascending prayer for Divine protection, and now when we behold the first District Conference we see them bending the knee to God and begging for Heaven's direction, their hearts in unison responding in the language of Scripture, "Without me ye can do nothing."

This was the first District Conference ever held by any Methodist body, and therefore a center of curiosity. So far as history shows, this was the first Conference ever held by any Methodist body, except Quarterly Conference, which was composed more largely of laymen than of ministers, and the first body of Methodists, which was purely a representative body, and whose members all held their seats only by the choice of their brethren. This Conference was therefore clearly an experiment; but the developments have shown that it was a success. The thousands of District Conferences and District Meetings which have been since held among Methodists of this country declares that a District Conference is a success. The President of the Conference had once been an itinerant of note, and had frequently been a member of Conferences, and in case of Quarterly Conferences, some times its presiding officer, I suppose; but there were two new features to him, even in this assembly. 1. He was there on a perfect equality with every other member (except what privileges were conferred on him by his election to the Presidency), and 2. He was there by the election of his brethren. Hitherto he had held seats in Conferences, where some of the members were on a shelf above him, some on the same shelf with him, and some on the shelf below him, but here all the members were on the same platform. Before that time he had held his seats in Conferences, because he was an itinerant, here he held his seat because he was the choice of his brethren.

None of the other members of this Conference had ever been members of any Conference before, save Quarterly Conferences, and when we consider that a majority of them were laymen we will very naturally suppose they felt a little awkward, having belonged, some of them, for many years where they had no right guaranteed by their Discipline of voting, much less of holding office, save as put in office by the preacher in charge, and not even owning any interest in the houses in which

they worshipped. But inexperienced as they were, the duty was upon them of putting in operation the new machinery of a new organization, and well and faithfully did they acquit themselves.

One of the first things done by the Conference after organization was to recognize the license of brother Carey Cox, a licentiate from the M. E. Church, South, and to pass a resolution that all ministers coming from other orthodox denominations be received as such in our Church, upon presentation of their credentials in proper form. The Conference then granted exhorter's license to brother John Ham, Daniel Carroll and Travis Ivey, they all having been duly recommended for such license by the churches to which they respectively belonged.

The Conference being impressed with the belief that a Church paper was essential to its prosperity, lost no time in looking to this important interest, and after discussing the matter at length, in which a free interchange of opinions were had among all the delegates, the Chair, upon motion, appointed a Committee of five "to take into consideration the subject of establishing a press, and report to the Church as early as practicable, for their ratification." That Committee consisted of brother J. F. N. Huddleston, W. L. Frambrough, Mickloberry Merritt, Absalom Ogletree and John Ham.

And here I may remark (by way of parenthesis) that this subject has ever been before us as a Church, but at no time in our history have we been sufficiently alive to its importance, and have too often contented ourselves with the passage of resolutions, or the "appointment of a committee," as to what the Church, in its then novel and untried condition, needed. I am not in any wise competent to say, but, now we need something more tangible, more real, more substantial than resolutions, or committees of investigation, we need money, subscribers, contributors for the paper. My dear brethren, pardon me for exhorting you throughout our connection to wake up, work for our paper among the people, write for the paper, encourage our worthy editor and don't leave him neglected to do so much work for us, but lend him a helping hand.

The Conference, before adjourning, adopted the following resolution, then found at the close of the book of Discipline:

"Resolved, unanimously, That in view of the great importance of this work of reformation, upon which we have voluntarily entered, the hasty manner in which it has been thus far prosecuted, and the imperfections which may consequently be found in it, we reserve to ourselves the right and will do ourselves and the cause we advocate the justice to call a convention of delegates from all the churches in our connection; and that said Convention shall appoint a committee, whose duty it shall be to revise this work throughout critically, after which it shall be put up permanently. Said Convention will be called as soon as practicable."

The Conference appointed next District Conference to be held at Mt. Hope church, Spalding county, Georgia.

This session of the Conference lasted three days, and was a remarkably quiet and harmonious session. It did much work and did it well, setting a worthy example to the many similar Conferences to come after it.

CHAPTER IX.

Having in the last chapter related the history of the first District Conference, I propose here to follow up the history of the District Conference at its various sessions up to the formation of different District Conferences and a State Conference in Georgia. The idea of what the term "District" signified seems at first to have been construed as indicating a Congressional District; accordingly, the heading of the minutes of the first and second District Conference designates the body as "the District Conference of the Congregational Methodist Church for the Third District of Georgia." After the third session, it was no longer designated as of "the Third Congressional District," but simply as "the District Conference of the Congregational Methodist Church," and they were certainly entitled to be called the District Conference, as there was at that time no other organized District Conference in the known world. All the churches organized in Georgia, and even some in Alabama, were connected with this District Conference.

The second session of this body was held at Mount Hope church, Spalding county, about four and one-half miles east of the city of Griffin, on the 11th day of December, 1852. A temporary organization was effected by calling Rev. J. F. N. Huddleston to the chair and upon examination it was found that the following delegates were present, with proper credentials to take their seats in the Conference, viz: From Rocky Creek--J. F. N. Huddleston, W. L. Fambro, M. Merritt and H. Phinazee; Rock Spring--A. H. Reeves, Theo. Williams and C. G. Harper; Providence--W. F. Mapp; New Hope--Daniel Carroll; Mount Hope--S. F. Speer and Thomas Thrower. An election of William L. Fambro as President, and Rev. Hiram Phinazee as Secretary.

Brother Fambro, although a layman, had been called to preside over the first meeting of the denomination at brother Merritt's house, as before stated, and was now called on to preside over the District Conference, composed, in a large proportion, of ministers and the best talent in the young Church, and such was the ability and zeal which he brought to the discharge of his duty as a presiding officer, that he was not only elected to preside over District Conferences thereafter, but was the presiding officer of the first State Conference ever organized, and subsequently presided with ability over the General Conference of the C. M. Church. I shall have more to say about this good man hereafter, when I shall have finished these historical sketches, and come to present some pen portraits of the founders of Congregational Methodism.

Four new churches sent delegates to this Conference, who were received and seated viz: From New Prospect, in Monroe county--Carey Cox and P. D. Pringle; Mount Zion, Carroll county--J. C. Pearson; Antioch and Mount Pisgah, in Alabama--James M. Adams. In addition to the duly elected delegates, as before stated, there were a large number of visiting brethren, who were duly invited to seats as honorary members of the body. Also, William Griffin, John Bass and Isaiah Wallis, fraternal messengers of the Methodist Protestant Church, and Rev. Mr. Reddingham, from the Lutheran Church. Two-thirds of the members of this Conference were laymen, showing a larger proportion of the lay element than the Conference which had preceded it. I suppose if some of the advocates of the theory of the ministry governing by divine right, or some of the opposers of lay representation, could have beheld this Conference entering on their duties, they would probably have adopted the language which a colored preacher once said Adam used when he awoke up out of his deep sleep, and "put on his specks and looked at Eve," "This is a bad job."

Nathaniel was a good man, yet when approached by one of his friends who informed him that the promised Messiah had been found and he hailed from Nazareth, asked with much of honest doubt, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" So in like manner those who had been educated to believe that the governing power of right rested in the hands of the ministry, and that the laity had neither the right nor the capacity to share in the government of the Church, had serious misgivings of the success of a government where the laity had the balance of power. But their doubts were as unfounded as were those of Nathaniel. And although there were not a few who looked on at the part the little new Church was taking in the battle of the ecclesiastical world against the power of darkness, and predicted its early downfall and signal failure, the long and eventful years which have since intervened--eventful as they have been--have left us a record of the labors of these laymen in Conference, which demonstrates that the confidence of their brethren was not misplaced when they chose these laymen to represent them in Conference.

The time had now come when the world was to have a demonstration of the fact that the masses of Methodists were as capable of transacting the business of their Church as the masses of other denominations, and the idea that nothing could be done except by the ministry was now to be exploded, and the great truth was to be discovered by both preachers and people, that the function of the minister would in chief be exercised in the pulpit, while the layman was to labor in the pew and in the government of the Church. Christ was to be the Head and both the laity and the clergy were to be co-workers, each in his proper sphere, doing the allotted work, showing that one was not to exist without the other, and that neither was independent of the other, nor exalted above the other, but formed separate parts in the grand and glorious whole, wherein all things work together for the glory of God and the good of His people.

The Conference was entertained by fraternal greetings between the representatives of the other sister churches and those of the C. M. Church, and the best and kindest of feeling prevailed. Theo. Williams having been properly recommended for license to exhort, was duly licensed as an exhorter by the Conference.

J. C. Pearson, James M. Adams, J. F. N. Huddleston, Robert Walker and W. A. McCune were appointed fraternal messengers to the next Conference of the Lutheran Church in Georgia. The next meeting of the Conference was appointed with the church at Rock Spring, Monroe county, beginning on Friday before the third Sabbath in May, 1853.

And thus ended the second session of the District Conference. Seven months and three days had passed from the meeting at brother Merritt's to the meeting of this Conference, and ~~eventful~~ months and days they had been--months of watching, weeping, praying and hoping on the part of the movers in this "departure;" months of persecution, bitterness and distrust on the part of its enemies, and months of anxious curiosity and speculation on the part of the outside world. But the fathers of Congregational Methodism took their cause "to the Lord in

and prosperity and advancement attended them, and now the fire had spread until eleven churches came from different sections of Georgia, and even from Alabama, and stood by the side of the twelve individuals who joined hands at brother Merritt's, saying, "Your God shall be my God; where you dwell, there will we dwell; where you die, there will we be buried."

CHAPTER X.

I come now to speak of the organization of the first Congregational Methodist Church in the State of Mississippi. In the fall of the year 1852, there lived in Richmond county, Georgia, a local elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by the name of Henry T. Jones. During the fall of that year this minister was attending a camp-meeting at a camp-ground in the county of Jefferson, called "Mt. Moriah." This camp-ground was within the bounds of one of the districts of the Georgia Annual Conference, of which Rev. John W. Glenn was the Presiding Elder, who was present at the camp-meeting. One day during the meeting Rev. H. T. Jones had preached, and after preaching retired to the preachers' tent and was lying down resting, when the Presiding Elder and a minister by the name of Dunn, entered the tent, sat down near where Mr. Jones was lying and began conversing on the subject of general Church matters. During the conversation the Presiding Elder said to Rev. Mr. Dunn that "brother Ogletree and a number of others had withdrawn from the Church and gone into a separate organization." This much of the conversation Rev. Mr. Jones accidentally heard, the tone and manner of the conversation indicated to him that it was intended to be private or confidential, and he did not seek to hear more of it.

Rev. Mr. Jones had never been fully satisfied with the government of the Church to which he belonged; but it came nearer to his standard of a Church--all things considered--than any Church of which he knew anything. Being a believer in the doctrine of an unlimited atonement and free salvation to all who would accept the terms of the gospel, the Calvinistic creeds of the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches forbade his identifying himself with them. And believing in personal, heart-felt piety, and the known power of experimental religion in the soul, the formalism of the Episcopalians forbade his uniting with that Church, while the government of the Methodist Protestant Church was even more objectionable to him than that of the M. E. Church, South. Hence he had been waiting and watching for some Church to make its appearance whose polity as well as doctrines he could fully indorse, and when this little fragment of information floated across his path, like a little cloud across the sky, he felt a longing desire to know more of it. But small as the revelation was it told him two things: 1st, That a portion of the members of the M. E. Church, South, in Georgia, had left that church. And 2nd, that brother Ogletree was one of the members of the new Church. But still other things must be known before this information would avail him anything. 1. He did not know where the new movement originated or was located. 2. He did not even know the given or Christian name of the only member of whom he had any information, to-wit, brother Ogletree. 3. He knew nothing of the character of the Church. But having long felt the necessity of certain reforms in the government of the M. E. Church, South, and knowing that the new Church was composed, in part, at least, of others, who had become dissatisfied with said Church, he fancied it was probable that they might have shared his objections, and formed the new Church with a view of meeting them.

At all events he wanted to learn more of this new organization, but how to find out was the difficulty. The tone and manner of the Presiding Elder in the conversation before stated indicated that he spoke of the matter confidentially, and hence he felt a delicacy to make inquiry of that functionary, and he did not know any one else from whom the desired information could be obtained. Shortly after this Dr. Lovick Pierce, then stationed in the city of Savannah, wrote a piece in the Southern Christian Advocate in reply to certain charges which had been laid at his door about the new organization, in which he stated the name of the new Church, and that those who took part in it lived in "a county above," and were composed of a number of local preachers and others of good name.

This additional information increased the desire of brother Jones to know more of "the Congregational Methodist Church and those local preachers and others in a county above," etc., but still he desired "more light."

In the fall of that year brother Jones removed to Jasper county, Miss., and while passing through Georgia, made diligent inquiry as to the post-office address of brother Ogletree, and finally succeeded in finding one man who could tell him where brother Ogletree lived. After reaching his new home and settling down he found some of his neighbors of the same mind with himself as to a church organization combining all the elements of Methodist faith and republican government. Brother Jones, therefore, in the spring or early summer of 1853, wrote to brother Ogletree at Forsyth, Ga., for information about the Congregational Methodist Church, and in

reply brother Ogletree sent him several copies of the little book of Discipline, with all other information desired about the organization of the Church, etc. Upon the receipt of these books brother Jones and his neighbors, a few in number, finding in the new movement the very features for which they had so long looked and hoped, met at the house of L. J. Jones, on the 29th day of July, 1853, and there organized with eight members the first Congregational Methodist Church in the State of Mississippi, and I beg leave to close this chapter by exhibiting a copy of the preamble and minutes of that meeting as furnished me by one of those who took part in the same. It is as follows:

"A number of members of different branches of the Christian Church, believing that the itinerant system, as at present carried out by different branches of the Methodist Church, has alike failed to meet the wants of the Church and the world, and believing the Congregational form of worship to be more in accord with the Holy Scriptures, and more efficient in feeding the flock of Christ as well as the spread of Scripture holiness, met at the house of Lazarus J. Jones, Esq., on Friday, July 29th, 1853, for the purpose of organizing a Congregational Methodist Church. After reading the Scriptures and prayer by Rev. James S. Terral, on motion brother Terral was called to the chair, and brother L. J. Jones was requested to act as Secretary. The following names from different denominations were then enrolled as members: Rev. Jas. S. Terral, Rev. Henry T. Jones, Lazarus J. Jones, George W. Ryan, Seaborn W. Jones, Pleasant Morris, Francis M. Jones and Mary S. Jones.

The Church was then organized by the election of Rev. Henry T. Jones, Elder, brother S. W. Jones, Leader, Pleasant Morris, Steward, and L. J. Jones, Clerk. The Church next proceeded to adopt the Constitution and government of the Congregational Methodist Church extant in the State of Georgia.

The third Sabbath in August and the Saturday before was the time appointed for the next church meeting. After prayer by Rev. H. T. Jones the meeting was dismissed.

Jas. S. Terral, Chairman.

L. J. Jones, Secretary.

CHAPTER XI.

The third District Conference held its session at Rock Spring Church, Monroe county, beginning on the 13th of May, 1853, the C. M. Church being then one year and five days old. Nine churches were represented at this Conference, Mt. Zion, in Carrol county, Georgia, and Mt. Pisgah and Antioch churches in Alabama, having become connected with District Conferences nearer home, sent no delegates to this Conference. Providence church had changed her name, and was enrolled among the churches this session under the name of "High Falls." New Prospect, having also changed, appeared under the name of Sand Hill, the rest of the churches still retaining their former names. Liberty Hill, Jackson, and Pleasant Grove, were admitted into the District Conference and their delegates seated. The delegation present was--from High Falls, W. P. Fambro; Jackson R. Shepherd, Jas. R. McCord; Pleasant Grove, D. P. Carson; Liberty Hill, J. E. Potts; Mt. Hope, S. F. Spear and Robert Walker; Rock Spring, Joshua Sheptrine, Theo. Williams, Robert Letson, Jr.; Sand Hill, W. H. Bankston, P. D. Pringle; Rocky Creek, M. Merritt, and H. Phinazee. James R. McCord was chosen President temporarily, and J. F. N. Huddleston, temporary Secretary. Upon organizing permanently, Rev. H. Phinazee was elected President, and James R. McCord, Secretary. Before the close of the Conference, John Carriker, as a delegate from Union church, Pike County, presented a petition for admission into the Conference. The petition was granted and he was duly seated as a delegate making the aggregate number of churches in the district ten.

The fourth session of this Conference was held at Jackson, Butts county; all ten of the churches were duly represented, and the Conference began its session on the 9th day of September, 1853. Rev. J. F. Wethersbee, was chosen temporary President, and Rev. H. Phinazee temporary Secretary.

The following delegates were present with proper authority, and took part in the organization, viz: From Union church, Uriah Fincher; New Hope, Daniel Carroll and L. P. Culpepper; Jackson, Isaac W. Smith and John W. McCord; Head's Academy, (formerly Liberty Hill), John P. Hunt; Fredonia, (formerly Sand Hill) Carey Cox, M. Goodman and Jackson Bush; High Falls, J. F. N. Huddleston, and Edward White; Pleasant Grove, George W. Barber, D. P. Carson and Thomas J. Giles; Rock Spring Joshua Sheptrine and Robert Letson; Mt. Home, S. F. Spear, V. Fish and Robert Walker; Mt. Zion (formerly Rocky Creek), David Ogletree and H. Phinazee. Rev. H. Phinazee was elected permanent President, and Jas. R. McCord, Secretary. John P. Hunt, from Head's Academy, and Daniel Carroll, from New Hope church, having been properly recommended by their respective churches for license to preach, were examined by a committee appointed for that purpose by the Conference, and were, in pursuance of the report and recommendation of that committee, duly licensed by the Conference to preach. The licenses of brothers Uriah Fincher, Travis Ivey,

and John Ham as exhorters, were renewed by the Conference, and brother Frederick Pearce from Pleasant Grove, having been duly recommended by that church, was licensed to exhort.

The reports from the various churches sent up to this Conference, showed that they were in a healthy and growing condition, one church only reported the same number of members as at the preceding Conference, all others had increased their numbers. Pleasant Grove, under the pastoral care of Rev. J. F. N. Huddleston, led the van, her membership having increased from twenty-five to sixty-five, while Fredonia, under the pastoral care of Rev. Absalom Ogletree, followed close behind with an increase of thirty-one members, raising its former number of thirty-eight to sixty-nine. Rock Spring from sixty-five had reached ninety-three. Mt. Hope had received twenty-three new members. New Hope eighteen, and all the rest of the nine had increased more or less, the aggregate increase in the district being one hundred and sixty-one.

The first district Conference for the year 1854, met at New Hope church, in Pike county. Rev. H. Phinazee was temporary President, and John B. Thurman temporary President, and John B. Thurman temporary Secretary. The proceedings of this session were quite interesting and perfectly harmonious, the reports showed continued prosperity and growth among the churches. This Conference was in March, 1854, and was the last Conference held during the third year of the existence of the C. M. Church. And although the birth-day of the Church was "a day of small things, the Church now represented by the delegates to this Conference, showed that the hand of God had guarded them and prospered them in their way.

Chapter XII.

The progress of God's work is sometimes rapid, at others very slow. Within less than seven months from the organization of the first Congregational Methodist church in Middle Georgia, the seed had sprung up in the State of Alabama, whither they had been wafted by favoring breezes, but it never gained a foothold in Florida until near the close of 1871, more than 19 years from the time of the first meeting at the house of brother Mickleberry Merritt. But such has ever been the history of the Church, and probably the future will not differ from the past in this particular.

In the year 1871, there lived in Alabama an old minister by the name of Virgil Nichols, who was a member of the C. M. Church. He was then very old and poor, his family consisted of his aged wife, a widowed daughter, Mrs. Eliza Morgan, and her three little girls, Emma, Sarah and Rebecca. In the latter part of 1871 father Nichols conceived the idea of moving to West Florida. And after making what arrangements he could, started to move between one and two hundred miles, with his helpless family and all his earthly goods in an ox-cart, drawn by one ox. Without stopping to speak of the privation, exposure and fatigues of his long, slow and disagreeable journey, I will content myself on this point by saying, he reached the end of his journey near Portland, Florida, about the 20th of December. Sick himself with fever, his wife with rheumatism, and two of his little grand-daughters also sick,--without provisions, without money--a stranger in a strange land. Here was the first representation of the C. M. Church in "the Land of Flowers." What a picture! Here was poverty, old age, widowhood, orphanage, and sickness, under the same roof. And under that roof was the hope of the C. M. Church for the future in that sunny land, where the birds sing all the year round, and the flowers bloom every month in the year. Reader, do you see this picture? Look at the shadows gathering about it. But lest you should not see the light as well as the shade, let us drop the curtain for a time and look at another picture. Near by this place there lived a gentleman who, although a married man, might be called a young man, financially he was "well-to-do" in the world. Socially he was beloved of his neighbors, morally he was in many respects a model, but religiously he was deficient. From what little I have learned and seen of him, I am inclined to the opinion that he had been converted probably years before, but had not joined any Church. His mother, who was a very good woman, had been a member of the M. E. Church, South, but having looked into its government and economy, became dissatisfied, and when she removed from Madison to West Florida, took her letter and never would unite with that Church again, and but for the organization of a C. M. Church near where she lived, would probably never have united with any Church again. This man's name was George H. Berry.

Shortly after father Nichols arrived, as before stated, the rumor that an old preacher and his family who had recently moved into the neighborhood were sick, and in need, came to the ears of Mr. Berry, and in obedience to the promptings of his heart, he went to see them, little dreaming of the new chapter in the Book of Life, which was about to begin with him. In my imagination I see him enter that

humble home, and stand bewildered at the evidence of his eyesight. Upon his lowly bed he beheld the aged and wasted servant of God, poor in earthly goods but rich in faith, unconscious of the fact that this feeble old man who was in need of food for his body, was ere long to minister to him in spiritual things, and that it was to be through such an humble instrument that God was to bless him, with the full enjoyment of the bread spiritual which cometh down from Heaven. There is a world of glory and brightness in God's manifestations. These two men thrown together by circumstances, seemed the counterpart of each other, neither able to do much by himself, but each possessing the special qualification which the other lacked, like the blind traveler and the lame beggar, unable to travel separate, but exactly suited to go together, bearing each others burdens, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ. Mr. Berry supplied the wants of the destitute and afflicted family as far as he could, received the thanks and gratitude of their hearts, and went back to his home followed by their payers and blessings, leaving the family profoundly impressed with the care which God takes of his children. While Mr. Berry felt not only a sense of a duty discharged, but also a mysterious interest in that old man upon his sick bed, and perhaps wondering, like Cornelius when he saw a vision at what all this should portend. The old and suffering saint had told him he belonged to the "Congregational Methodist Church." Mr. Berry had never before heard of such a church; there was something like a charm in the name to him. Question after question about its doctrines, its usages, its government, where it originated, etc., came crowding into his mind, but the sufferer was too feeble and too much in need of rest to answer them now, hence he must wait.

And now, reader, when for the third time we look into that humble home, we see a little light mingling with the shade, and yet, perhaps, you may ask can anything considerable come from such feeble instrumentalities? To which I answer, come with me to the sequel and you shall see in the next chapter, and learn that

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm."

Chapter XIII.

The acquaintance between father Nichols and his new friend grew with each visit of Mr. Berry to his house. Rest and kind attention cheered, comforted and strengthened the aged Christian. As soon as his returning strength would permit, he began to preach whenever and wherever opportunity was offered. His preaching created considerable stir. Some objected to him because he was what they called a new light; others said he was too old to preach, while others became interested in his preaching. Father Nichols seemed to have a special, earnest desire for the salvation of Mr. Berry, and frequently approached him on the subject of religion, but met with little encouragement. But one day he handed Mr. Berry a copy of the C. M. Discipline, and specially requested him to read it. This Mr. Berry consented to do. The perusal of that little book was attended with great interest in the mind of Mr. Berry. In it he found the good old Methodist doctrines, which had been taught him by his good mother, and a government so just, evenly balanced, and Republican in every feature, that his judgment at once indorsed the whole thing, as combining the best faith and government he had ever seen, and soon afterward he gladdened the heart of father Nichols by telling him that whenever he joined any church it would be the C. M. Church.

Father Nichols now began to try for an organization, but difficulties gathered about him, which would have deterred many a younger man, and indeed any man whose heart was not "fixed," and although he perhaps felt almost like Elijah in the desert, he nevertheless pressed forward, resolved to succeed if possible. Finally he determined to make the venture. He accordingly made a visit up into middle Alabama, and while passing through Louisville, called on Dr. D. A. Murdock, a minister of the C. M. Church; also brother Haines, of New Topia, and induced those good brethren to promise to visit the community where he lived and preach. From what father Nichols had told them, these brethren felt peculiarly impressed that it was their duty to go. Accordingly they wrote to Mr. Berry (whose address had been furnished them by father Nichols), requesting him to give notice at his mill that they would begin a meeting at a church near by, called "Union," on Saturday before the third Sunday in October, 1872. As the appointed time drew near for these brethren to leave home and start on their long journey of 130 miles, difficulties began to gather about them, and the nearer the day came the more and greater were the obstacles in the way. Dr. Murdock said it really seemed that he could not go, and still the Spirit impressed him that he must go. Finally the time to start came, with a heavy practice and several patients seriously sick; he resolved to leave all in the hands of God, and go in obedience to the Macedonian cry, the echoes of which

they heard coming from Florida, "Come and help us." They reached their destination in good time, began the meeting at the time designated, and had a glorious meeting, and before they left organized the first C. M. church ever constituted in Florida, consisting of seven members--two males and five females, and included in that number was George H. Berry. This little flock organized October 20, 1872, and called father Nichols as their pastor.

From the day that father Nichols landed in Florida, he had watched and waited to see the Church which he loved so well planted in that State, and from the day that George H. Berry came like "the good Samaritan" to visit the afflicted and feed the hungry of his household, he had not ceased to pray that he might enter fully into that service, for which he believed he would be so well fitted, if his heart was only full of God's love. And now, like good old Simeon waiting for the consolation of Israel, wandering in the temple one morning and seeing the promised "Child Redeemer," felt that life's labor was ended, so father Nichols, having seen the C. M. Church established in "the Land of Flowers," and his kind friend Berry taking his stand as a member of that Church and a servant of God, looked complacently for life's sun-set to come and put a period to his labors and trials, and soon it came. On the 24th of December, 1872, the Great Captain, under whose command he had so long and so faithfully fought, called him back from the face of the foe, and the old soldier, scarred, weary and wasted with life's long conflicts, stacked his arms and laid down his well-worn armor on life's last and brightest battle-field and went home a conqueror, while the angel choir sang--"Soldier of Christ, well done.

The little church so recently organized, so few in numbers, and feeble in earthly resources, with only six members--five of these females, and three of the females widows and one an orphan--found themselves without a pastor and 120 miles from the nearest church of their "faith and order," and to make their condition more unhappy, the devil had kindled the fire of persecution around them on every side. But this only served to bind them closer to each other, and to make them feel more intensely their utter dependence on the hand of their Heavenly Father, and, like the disciples who were gathered together praying for the deliverance of Peter from prison, this little band prayed continually that God would send them help. They petitioned the District Conference for a preacher, but no answer came. Finally God moved upon the heart of brother Berry, who began, under the promptings of the Holy Spirit, to conduct meetings for the little flock, and finally, in May, 1873, when the General Conference met at Mount Jefferson, Alabama, brother Berry was there (having been properly recommended for ordination), and on Sunday, the 12th day of May, was solemnly ordained to the office of Elder in the Church of God.

Immediately upon his return the little church of five women called him to be their pastor. He accepted, and entered upon his duty "trembling" but trusting.

God has greatly blessed and prospered his labors, and the little church has increased until there are today in West Florida six churches with 240 members, three ordained ministers and seven exhorters, and the good work goes on. And many there are all over that country who bless the day when father Nichols came to make his home in this section.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Second District Conference in Georgia for the year 1854, met with the church at Pleasant Grove on the first day of September. S. F. Speer, of Mount Hope church was elected as temporary President, and J. R. McCord, of Jackson, temporary Secretary. The following delegates were reported present with proper certificates, viz: From Pleasant Grove, Thomas J. Giles, David P. Carson and John B. Thurman; Mount Zion, Absalom Ogletree, Travis Ivey, Hiram Phinazee and Wm. L. Fambrough; New Hope, Jas. Lefsey and Daniel Carroll; Union, Uriah Fincher; Jackson, J. R. McCord and Caswell Ethridge; Fredonia, William E. Potts, Jas. A. Means and Jas. Brazier; Rock Spring, Joshua Sheptrine, Robert Letson, Peter Nicholson and Wm. P. Sheptrine; Mount Hope, Robert Walker, Washington Warren and Simeon F. Speer; Providence, J. F. N. Huddleson and W. F. Mapp; Mount Pleasant, Jesse Waddell; and Liberty, W. A. Walker. The election of permanent officers resulted in the choice of Rev. Absalom Ogletree, President, and Jas. R. McCord, Secretary. Jno. Bass, C. S. Lescur and McKendree Tucker, were present as fraternal messengers from the Methodist Protestant Church. Rev. John A. Hurst and Peter M. Roland, were present as visiting brethren from the C. M. Church in Alabama.

At the time of this Conference I was a youth of seventeen, and a member of the church where the Conference was held, and will here record some of my recollections of the visiting and fraternal brethren.

My recollection of brother Lescur of the fraternal delegates M. P. Church is limited, I remember but very little, indeed, so little, that I can only say I can only say I thought him a very proper person to be sent on such a mission. Brother John Bass was a layman, grave and dignified in manner, and noble and commanding in appearance, he was indeed a fine specimen of the elegant, cultivated, Christian

gentleman, his conversational powers were very fine, and I then felt it would be a privilege hard to be valued, to associate with him. Brother McKendree Tucker was a minister, then in the prime of life, and at the zenith of his usefulness. I remember to-day distinctly, how I sat with delight and listened to two sermons from him during that meeting. In the beginning of his discourse those not accustomed to his preaching, would be impressed with the idea that his capacity was quite limited. During the first ten minutes after announcing his text, he would proceed as though his subject had not been digested, and it would seem that he was entering upon a rambling talk, rather than a well arranged sermon, and even his voice appeared to be not subject to control; but as he advanced he seemed to catch inspiration, and the longer he preached, the deeper he plunged into his subject, and the higher he soared in his illustrations, clearer, louder and sweeter his clarion voice would reach every corner, and impress every ear in the house; you could but seldom see anybody asleep while brother Tucker was preaching, nobody could afford to sleep on such an occasion. And when he would take his seat, you would rarely hear any objection urged to the sermon, except that it was too short. I never saw brother Tucker until that meeting, but I learned to love him much then, and I have been ever since learning to love him more.

Brother Hurst was an old man, white haired and venerable, he appeared to grace the sacred stand as much as any man I ever saw. He delighted in his Master's work and loved nothing else so much as duty. His sermons were plain and practical and pointed. He never gathered flowers of fancy to weave into the web of his discourses, but he could tell, with wondrous power, the old, old story of the Cross. And sometimes when he would come to speak of the Heavenly Canaan, he would impress his hearers with the heavenly brightness which appeared that morning when Moses stood alone upon Pisgah's summit, and feasted his eyes upon the earthly Canaan until he had been prepared to look upon the matchless beauty of the Heavenly Land. He was indeed a grand old man, and a noble preacher. Brother Rowland was then quite a young man, and I believe had not been licensed to preach; he was in appearance tall and awkward, and yet he seemed to have a kind of personal magnetism about him, that made everybody who came in contact with him love him. Brother Rowland is still living, and is one of the most useful ministers belonging to our Church. I have not space to say more of these brethren now, but I hope to be able to write more at length about some, if not all of them, before a great while.

A resolution calling a Convention at Mount Zion in the spring of 1855, was adopted by this Conference. The Church now having taken root in the three States of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, it was thought advisable to call a Convention of all the churches to revise the Discipline. By another resolution the Methodist Protestant Church was invited to send delegates to that Convention. And Revs. H. Phinazee, A. Ogletree, J. F. N. Huddleston, and John P. Hunt, with brothers O. P. Willis, M. Merritt, and W. A. McCune, of the laity, were appointed fraternal messengers to visit the next session of the Georgia Annual Conference of the M. P. Church.

And thus closed the last Conference for the third year of the existence of the new Church, and the "little flock" "thanked God and took courage."

CHAPTER XV.

From 1852 to 1872 no organization under the Congregational Methodist Discipline had even been effected in the State of Missouri; indeed prior to that time, the news of the origin or existence of such a Church, even, does not appear to have reached that State; so studiously had the publication of what had started in Georgia and spread to Alabama, Mississippi and other States been avoided, that the good people of this growing young State had not so much as heard that such an organization existed at all.

There lived in 1873, near Marquand, Missouri, a minister of the M. E. Church, South, who belonged to the local ranks, and was a man of some prominence in that Church, by the name of Reuben Watts. Brother Watts had long been dissatisfied with the episcopacy and itineracy of his Church, but did not know of any organization where he could be better suited, and therefore had made the best he could of his unpleasant position as local preacher, and submitted to the snubbing and slights which usually fall to the lot of that class of good men in that Church, believing that what could not be cured must needs be endured.

At the time referred to brother Watts was a subscriber to the Christian Advocate published in the city of St. Louis, and then edited by Dr. McAnnally. In May, 1873, the editor of the Advocate gave in the shape of an editorial, a brief outline of the form of government of the different branches of the Methodist Church, and among the rest the form of government of the C. M. Church. As the eye of brother Watts fell on this outline of the Congregational Methodist Church government, he at once recognized the features of government in a Methodist church which he had long since endorsed, and which were in full accord with his own views.

There were quite a number of ministers and members of the M. E. Church, South, in the same community, who were not satisfied with episcopal power and itinerant rule, as indeed there are in every community (almost where they have an organization. To some of these brother Watts communicated the information gathered, as before stated, from the Christian Advocate. Among the latter may be mentioned Rev. Wm. Watts and Rev. L. P. Yount. By some means (I cannot exactly say how) brother Yount ascertained that Rev. Eppes Tucker of Opelika, Ala., was then publishing the CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST, the organ of the C. M. Church, and wrote to him for some copies of his paper. These were forwarded, and a careful perusal of the same resulted in a more earnest desire to know more of the Church; hence brother Yount wrote to brother Tucker for three copies of the C. M. Church Discipline. These were promptly forwarded and duly received. Earnestly searching for a Methodist organization with whose government they would be satisfied, but unwilling to take any hasty or unadvised step, these good men carefully studied and closely scanned every feature of the C. M. Church Discipline. Finally, after long and patient study and much earnest prayer to God for direction, they declared their convictions one to the other, that the C. M. Church was the long looked-for thing--"a church with Methodist doctrines and republican government."

This feeling was not confined to one community, but the three little books were passed from house to house, and from neighborhood to neighborhood, and large numbers of Methodists became enlisted in the movement which was about to begin in that State. Finally during the first month of the year 1874, the Missouri brethren resolved to take action in the premises, and on the 31st day of January of that year brother Reuben Watts organized the first Congregational Methodist Church in Missouri, at Patton, Bellinger county, with eleven members. Four days later he organized a second church at Rock Point, with sixteen members, and the following week he organized the third one at Pleasant Valley, with a membership of twenty-four.

On the 21st of July, 1879, brother R. Watts, then upon his bed and near the shore of eternity, wrote me in reference to the condition of the Church as follows; referring to the first organization of the C. M. Church in Missouri, he said: "Since which time we have most gloriously prospered, amid all the hard sayings and persecutions that a Christian people ever underwent."

Rev. Eppes Tucker visited Missouri not long after the first start of Congregational Methodism there, and did some effective work for the Church there. Prosperity has attended the labors of our ministry, and they rejoice in the blessings of "peace."

CHAPTER XVI.

The first District Conference for the year 1855 met with the church at Providence, in Monroe county, Georgia.

The following were the delegates in attendance:

From Providence--John Ham, John E. Pettagrew, William Scarborough, B. M. Huddleston and H. B. Fletcher.

From Jackson--R. F. Gilmore.

Pleasant Grove--F. M. Wise, Stephen Moore, D. P. Carson, T. B. McCune and S. C. McDaniel.

Mt. Zion--Wm. L. Fambro, George Edwards and David Ogletree.

Fredonia--W. H. Bankston, Cary Cox and P. D. Pringle.

Rock Spring--Absalom Ogletree, Theo. Williams, A. Hodge and C. G. Harper.

New Hope--Lewis Culppeppor and Daniel Carroll.

Mt. Pleasant--Jesse Waddell and John Roper.

Union--William H. Graham.

Liberty Hill--James Potts.

Rev. Cary Cox was elected President, and David Ogletree, Secretary.

Mt. Carmel C. M. church, located in Crawford county, made application for admission into the Conference. The church was duly admitted, and brother M. Ogletree, her delegate, seated.

Brother Jesse Waddell having been properly recommended by his church (Mt. Pleasant), was granted license to exhort.

The aggregate membership of the district now reached nearly six hundred.

This Conference met on the 23rd day of March.

The next District Conference met with the church at Fredonia, Monroe county, on the 7th of September, 1855. The following delegates attended:

From Fredonia--Cary Cox, Jackson Bush and W. H. Bankston.

From Mt. Zion--H. Phinazee, W. L. Fambro and Mickolberry Merritt.

From Providence--Edward White and J. F. N. Huddleston.

From Rock Spring--Absalom Ogletree.

From Mt. Hope--W. Warren and W. Orear.

From New Hope--Daniel Carroll and Lewis Culpepper.

From Union--Uriah Fincher.

From Philadelphia (formerly Liberty Hill)--J. E. Potts.

From Mt. Pleasant--Jesse Waddell.

From Pleasant Grove--John B. Thurman, John S. McDaniel and George W. Barber.

From Jackson--Lory Goddard.

From Mt. Carmel--W. V. Gordon.

W. L. Fambro was elected President and H. Phinazee, Secretary. John S. McDaniel of Pleasant Grove, and Uriah Fincher, of Union, having been recommended by their respective churches for license to preach were duly examined by the Conference and received license.

The license of Daniel Carroll and John P. Hunt were renewed. Pleasant Hill, C. M. church, of Upson county, made application and was admitted into the Conference.

The next session of this body met at New Hope church, in Pike county, March 7, 1856, and was composed of the following delegates:

Jackson Bush, W. H. Bankston, P. D. Pringle, T. W. Moye, Daniel Carroll, L. P. Culpepper, Theo. Williams, M. Byrd, Edward White, Wm. P. Fambro, W. L. Fambro, W. H. Graham, William Gregory, S. C. McDaniel and Bolden Brown.

William L. Fambro was elected President and Thomas W. Moye, Secretary.

Among other regular business this Conference elected and ordained Daniel Carroll an Elder, he having been properly recommended by New Hope church of which he was a member. And after going through with the regular order of business the Conference resolved itself into a State Conference retaining the same officers.

The President appointed a committee of seven viz: Carey Cox, W. H. Graham, Theo. Williams, W. L. Fambro, T. W. Moye, L. P. Culpepper and B. Brown to divide the churches into districts.

The Committee reported that they recommend that the churches be divided into two districts to be called the Towaliga and Flint River Districts. That the churches of New Market, Pleasant Grove, New Providence, Rock Spring, Philadelphia and Mt. Zion compose the Towaliga district, and the churches of Mt. Pleasant, Pleasant Hill, New Hope, Mt. Hope and Mt. Carmel, Fredonia and Union compose the Flint River district.

The report of the Committee was adopted.

The Conference then elected the following delegates to the General Conference to be held at Mt. Zion, Monroe county, Georgia, in May of that year, viz: H. Phinazee, A. Ogletree, C. Cox, W. A. McCune, W. L. Fambro, W. P. Fambro and M. Morritt.

And now having traced this movement from its inception to this point, I shall not follow it further. I shall take one step backwards to notice the Convention of 1855 and then leave the matter to some able pen to write the regular history of the Congregational Methodist Church.

CHAPTER XVII.

I now come to write of one of the most important incidents in the history of our Church, to-wit: the Convention of 1855. I however approach this part of my duty more reluctantly than I have any other part of it in this matter, for the reason that I do not possess sufficient information about the composition or the action of that August and important assemblage, to write about it in a manner at all creditable. More than once I have almost determined to say nothing about that Convention, fearing that an effort to write about such a Convention without more information than I have been able to gather, would be worse than no history at all. But having started, I feel now that it would be manifestly improper to close my labors without referring to the Convention of 1855.

It will be remembered that the first district Conference ever held, passed a resolution stating in substance that from the hurried manner in which the first book of Discipline was gotten up, a Convention of all the churches would be called as soon as circumstances authorized it to revise the Discipline for permanent use. Accordingly in 1854 when the Church had taken hold in different parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, the district Conference in Georgia passed a resolution calling such a Convention to meet at Mt. Zion, in the spring of the next year. And in obedience to this call, the different churches throughout the entire connection elected delegates to said Convention which met on the _____ day of _____ 1855. William L. Fambro, who had been the President of first district Conference and one of the "original" movers in this direction, was in every way an appropriate person for the Presidency of this important body of Christians, to which he was unanimously called by his brethren.

One of the most important committees appointed by this body, was the Committee on Revisals. That Committee consisting of nine members, was filled with three of the ablest delegates from each of the three States of Georgia, Alabama

and Mississippi, viz: J. F. N. Huddleston, Absalom Ogletree and William A. McCune, of Georgia; John A. Hurst, James M. Adams and Robert D. Kennedy, of Alabama, and L. J. Jones, Henry T. Jones and Willis Windham, of Mississippi. This able Committee after patient, earnest, laborious effort as the result of their labors, reported to the Conference the following seven paragraphs as embodying the foundation principles of the C. M. Church, as a distinctive denomination of Christians. (These are found on pages 5 through 8 in the tenth edition of our Discipline.)

This able report was written by a layman viz: L. J. Jones, of Mississippi, now the editor of "The Congregational Methodist." The substance of the report having been agreed on by the Committee, brother Jones, at their request, put it in shape--and when he presented it to the Committee they were so well pleased with it that they adopted it without a single change.

The report of this Committee was approved by the Convention, and with these fundamental principles thus adopted and settled, as the basis of the distinctive features by the representatives of the Congregational Methodist Church, that humble Church, the child of so many prayers, of so many prayers and tears, of so many good men, took its stand among the Christian denominations, to take part in the great battle for religion and right.

And with these fundamental doctrines thus adopted, the C. M. Church has ever since been satisfied. Seven out of nine of the good men who composed that Committee, have ended their mortal strife, and now rest from their labors, two alone remain. But their work still lives to-day, twenty thousand Congregational Methodists delight in the record of that Committee on Revisals, and many who do not belong to the C. M. Church indorse every word of those seven paragraphs. Methodism has been planted where an Episcopal or a semi-Episcopal Methodist church could not have lived, many useful ministers who would never have submitted to the degrading distinctions in other branches of the Methodist Church, are doing valiant service for God in the ranks of the C. M. Church. And still the good work goes on. But my task is done, imperfectly done though it may be.

